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ABSTRACT

The study explored the impact of mid-career changes for women who were enrolled in or had recently completed a program in the Wisconsin Vocational, Technical, and Adult Education (VTAE) System for the purpose of changing careers from housewife and mother to that of labor force participant. Sixty-six women, aged 30-49, returned a survey questionnaire that sought information about socioeconomic, marital, and educational status; the effect of the change on interpersonal relationships and life styles; motivation for change; resulting benefits and liabilities; and self-image. An important objective was to develop implications and recommendations for VTAE system programing and to design a model of mid-career decision making for women. It was found that the primary motivation for a return to school was financial. The majority experienced a feeling of achievement and an increase in self-confidence, with new friends, interests, and experiences rated as important benefits. The greatest problems were adjusting to the student role and coping with the demands of home and school responsibilities. Suggestions were offered on ways to encourage women to enter to enter male-oriented occupations and on ways to improve preparation and counseling for re-entering school and the labor market. (NJ)

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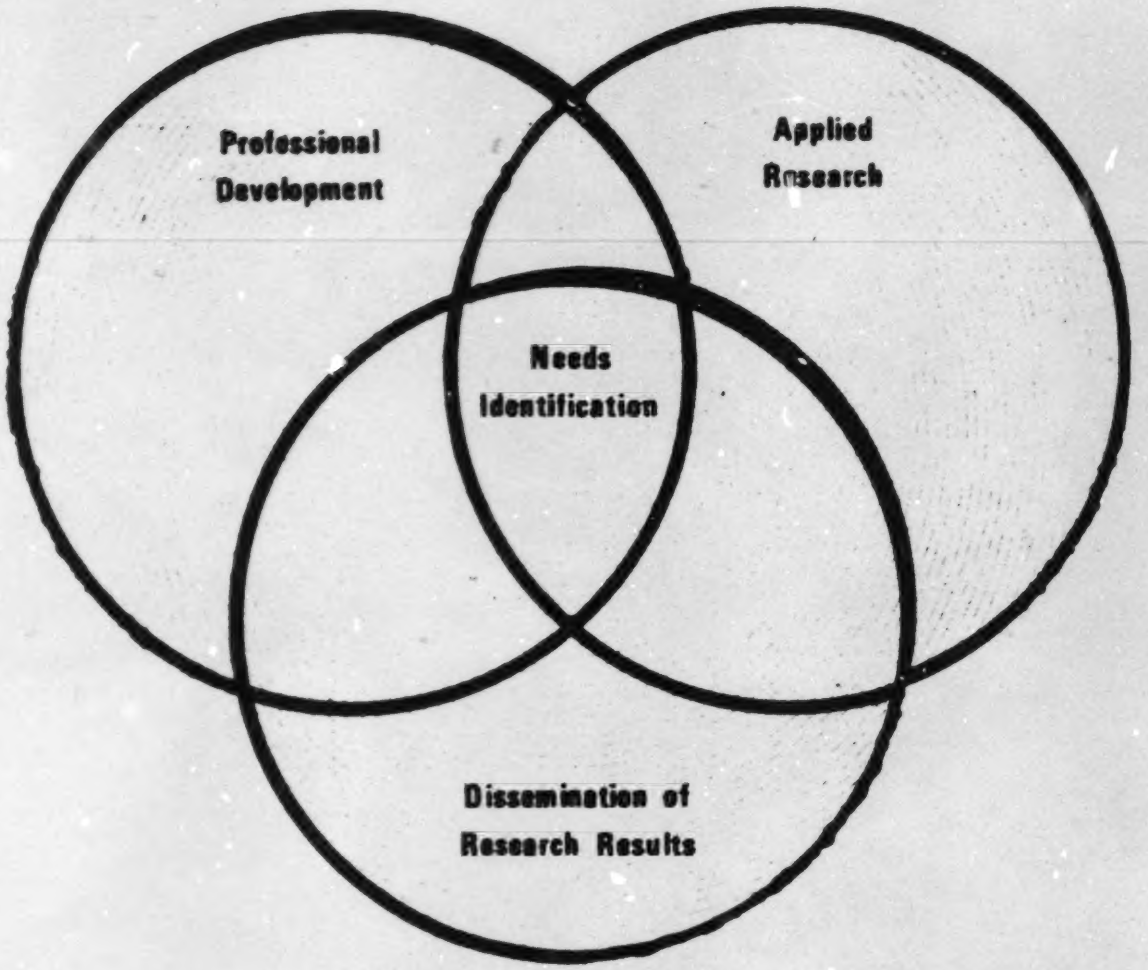

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Center For Vocational, Technical And Adult Education UW-Stout Menomonie, Wisc. (54751)

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF MID-CAREER CHANGES FOR WOMEN

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Center for Vocational, Technical and
Adult Education

University of Wisconsin--Stout

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF MID-CAREER CHANGES FOR WOMEN

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Finally, a sincere thank you to the staff at the Center for VTAE for their interest and cooperation during this project.

CHAPTER I

THE MID-CAREER CHANGE STUDY

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the dynamics of mid-career changes for women, focusing specifically on the change from housewife and mother to labor force participant. The investigation centered on the sociological and psychological areas of concern to women facing the challenge of entering a career outside the home. Common problems, opportunities, obstacles and benefits were explored with the intention of designing a useful mid-career decision-making model and for making recommendations to the VTAE system for programming.

To ascertain the needs of these women a sample of 152 women in 13 VTAE districts was contacted. Twenty of these women were personally interviewed. One hundred thirty two received the survey instrument in the mail of which 46 were answered and returned. The total number of subjects was 66.

The results of this study revealed that approximately half of the female mid-career changers in the VTAE schools were separated, widowed, or divorced. They had an average of 3.2 children who were most likely to be of elementary school age. Seventy-nine and four tenths percent of all these women who were not married had an average annual income of less than $5,000. Most of them were utilizing government assistance programs to finance their mid-career change.

Eighty percent of the mid-career changers had at least a high school diploma previous to their enrollment in a VTAE program and over 90% felt satisfied with their grades and progress. Sixty-eight and two tenths percent of these women will or did seek employment immediately upon completion of their studies, usually without job or vocational counseling from a VTAE staff member.

Housewives returned to school for a number of reasons. Obviously, the family financial situation was a major reason. Another motivating force was the desire for self-improvement. Many returning housewives were anxious for the chance to initiate a new or refresh themselves in a previous career. Eighty-three and three tenths percent of the women surveyed in this study experienced a feeling of achievement and 74.2% an increase in self-confidence when they returned to school. New friends, interests and experiences also rated among the most common back-to-school benefits enjoyed.

The greatest problems mid-career changers faced were orienting themselves to their new lifestyle as a student and coping with the conflicting time demands of home and school responsibilities.

Twenty-eight of the 32 married women's husbands were highly or generally favorable toward their wife's mid-career change as were most of the children and friends of all the respondents. This social support was a key factor in the successful transition for many of the women.

Most women in this study did not encounter age and/or sex discrimination in any facet of their VTAE experience. While very few of these females were enrolled in traditionally male-oriented training programs, about half expressed interest and ability in this direction.

Interestingly, these mid-career changers were more likely to turn to an instructor rather than a counselor when faced with personal, academic,

or vocational problems and were often unaware of existing counseling services and alternative training programs. From their own experiences, they were able to recommend improvements and innovations in VTAE programming and counseling services. Among these were provision of an employment service, a reorientation class for returning housewives, single-parent counseling services and advertising of the various VTAE programs.

From the findings of this study and the various recommendations of those involved in mid-career change, a mid-career decision-making model was formulated. With this model the woman and the VTAE school can work together to become aware of, analyze, and act upon the various sociological and psychological factors present in each mid-career decision.

Statement of the Problem

This study was an exploration of the sociological and psychological impacts and areas of concern to women engaged in mid-career change with the purpose of defining recommendations for VTAE system programming and of designing a mid-career decision-making model.

Objectives

Four specific objectives provided the outline for this study.

1. Identify areas of personal conflict for women changing careers at at the paraprofessional or non-professional levels.
2. Identify common socioeconomic and psychological benefits enjoyed and liabilities incurred by these women.
3. Develop implications and recommendations for VTAE system programming.
4. Design a useful model for mid-career decision-making whereby these women and those working with them such as teachers, counselors, and employers can better understand, cope with, and utilize the personal dynamics of their changing lifestyles.

Rationale

As the phenomenon of women starting new careers after the age of 30 increases, books and articles have started appearing to help them understand and initiate the transition. O'Neill (1965) found that in order for a woman to be successful in this endeavor, she must have a definite reason and strong motivation for change, the ability to organize and schedule, a long-term outlook, and family cooperation.

Musgrave and Wheeler-Bennett (1972) define the change from work inside to outside the home as a "critical status transition" due to the change in the family's relationships and report that most husbands and wives noted that the working wife was livelier, better company, more tolerant and better tempered. They also report that one of the main obstacles for women is their lack of confidence due to the protective atmosphere of home. Cotton (1965) noted that children reflect the attitudes of their parents in regard to mothers working outside the home and that employers describe working mothers to be stable, mature, steady, dependable, mentally adapted to meeting and serving others' needs, conscientious, effective, and to have an excellent understanding of people. LaRouch and Welch (1975) state that self-doubt and how to explain all those years at home are a mid-career changers biggest problems. At workshops women are encouraged to find out as much as possible about the fields that interest them and learn to reinterpret their household activities in business terms.

In a study conducted on a series of regional and national seminar/workshops (1974), it was found that nearly two-thirds of all female workers are single, divorced, widowed, or have husbands earning less than $7,000 per year, underscoring that fact that most women indeed must work for economic reasons.

When Hiestand (1971) sampled both men and women who had returned to school for the purpose of career change, he was surprised to find that only a few had sought any type of counseling about their decision. Approximately 50% reported no academic problems in school whatsoever, 75% had spouses whose attitudes were highly or generally favorable regarding their decision and 25% noted that their return to school reduced their social life but had a positive psychological effect on their children.

In a study on mid-life career redirection for the National Science Foundation (1975) it was reported that while 31% of all housewives between the ages of 35 and 54 are engaged in learning for the purpose of job change, they are one of the categories most often slighted in policy making. This study also reported that the major barriers for anyone wanting to change careers during mid-life are cost, time, administrative rigidities and social constraints such as child and home care responsibilities and low self-esteem.

Others have gone beyond findings to suggest decision-making models. Farmer (1971) notes three methods for helping women resolve the career-home conflict and to assist them in a vocational choice. One method involves the use of a live or video-taped peer model who discusses the conflict and explores methods for resolving it. Another method is an empathetic relationship with a counselor who considers each woman's unique situation. The third method employs Decision-Making Theory, utilizing both the objective and subjective data of the conflict.

In a study prepared for the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (1966) a model for a comprehensive total life plan was developed which focused on awareness, analysis and action of such areas as the woman's personal desires and preferences, her need for edu-

cation and training and the realities of the working world. The National Science Foundation outlined the process of mid-life career redirection focusing on sources, precipitators of change, exploration, selection and preparation for a new career and how these factors provide feedback to each other. This study also made definitive recommendations as to policies affecting mid-career changers. Among these are:

> Redirection schemes should heavily emphasize aptitude diagnosis, provision of realistic job market information and placement assistance. Instruction, when necessary, should be on-the-job whenever possible and should concentrate on concrete and practical approaches to learning. Courses need to be short and intensive with flexible hours. . .
>
> (Recommendations for counseling services)
> An important function would be to keep track of clients even after they have used the counseling and referral services. In this way the counselors could continually upgrade the quality of their work by comparing their advice and recommendations with the outcome for their clients.

High on the priority list of specific recommendations to female career changers is the plea to consider traditionally male-oriented occupations. The Women's Bureau of the U. S. Department of Labor reports that while over half of all women between the ages of 18 and 64 are in the labor force they are clustered in 8% of the occupations. The 1970's hold exciting and well-paying positions in the new and developing technical health occupations and skilled trades. The Bureau urges women to reconsider their career aspirations and recommends that employers and vocational schools work together to improve and increase related courses and to change attitudes toward training women for skilled trades.

CHAPTER II

Methods and Procedures

Population

In this study a mid-career changer was defined as a woman between the ages of 30 and 49 who was presently enrolled in or who had recently completed a VTAE program of study for the purpose of changing her career from that of housewife/mother to labor force participant. An attempt was made to reach a representative sample of these women throughout the state. The sixteen VTAE districts in Wisconsin were contacted and requested to provide a list of women who met the age and career change qualifications. Fifteen districts cooperated with this request. (Appendix A: VTAE districts providing mid-career change respondents) Two districts were omitted in the survey because subject's names were not submitted in time to meet the project deadline. Efforts were made to select women in a variety of occupational training programs and to reach women who had already completed their education and were now employed. One hundred and thirty two women received the survey form through the mail and an additional 20 were personally interviewed.

Developing the Questionnaire

An eight-page survey instrument was developed for data collection from the women involved in mid-career change. (Appendix B)

The literature review provided a guideline for areas in need of investigation. Specifically these were:

1. Socio-economic status including financing the transition stage
2. Reactions and relationships with spouse, family and friends due to career change
3. The woman's self-image
4. Use of time, new relationships, interests, and experiences

Assistance was gained through consultations with advisory personnel at the University of Wisconsin Stout: Orville Nelson and Harold Halfin, Co-Director of the Center for Vocational, Technical and Adult Education.

Table II-1 summarizes the objectives and specific research areas of the study and correlates them with the survey questions designed to meet these objectives.

Table II-1

Research Objectives and Corresponding Survey Questions
For Mid-Career Change Survey Instrument

OBJECTIVES	SURVEY QUESTIONS
Classification Data	1--9
Objectives 1 and 2: Identify areas of personal conflict for women changing careers. Identify common socioeconomic and psychological benefits enjoyed and liabilities incurred. Research Area 1: Socioeconomic status including financing the transition stage.	10--14
Objectives 1 and 2: Research Area 2: Reactions and relationships with spouse, family and friends due to career change.	15--17
Objectives 1 and 2: Research Area 3: The woman's self-image. Research Area 4: Use of time, new relationships, interest, and experiences	18--24

OBJECTIVES	SURVEY QUESTIONS
Objective 3: Develop implications and recommendations for VTAE system programming	24--40
Objective 4: Design a useful model for mid-career decision-making	25--40

A pilot test of the survey instrument was administered to eight women in the Menomonie area who were mid-career changers. Their reactions and suggestions were incorporated into the final form. In addition, a copy of the rough draft was sent to Roland Krogstad for review by WBVTAE staff. Their comments were utilized to refine the instrument. The finalized questionnaire was then printed for mailing and interviewing procedures.

Mailing and Interviewing Procedures

During May and June, the survey instrument was sent to 132 women whose names and addresses were supplied by the VTAE district in which they were presently or recently enrolled. A cover letter and business reply envelope were enclosed with the instrument.

Upon completion, the surveys were mailed to Sharon Nero at the Center for Vocational, Technical and Adult Education, University of Wisconsin-Stout.

Thirty eight, or twenty eight percent of the women responded to the initial survey contact. Twenty five of the non-responders were selected to receive additional surveys. Thirty two percent, or eight of these women then responded. Therefore a total of 46 or 34.8% of the women sampled by mail were responders. Five other non-responders were contacted by telephone

and asked selected questions to discern whether there were any major differences between the response and no-response groups. No differences were found to exist.

Twenty additional women from 5 VTAE districts were personally interviewed using the same survey instrument which the other women received in the mail. These interviews proved invaluable for providing in-depth coverage of the various questions and responses, allowing women to discuss their mid-career changes at length.

There were no significant differences between the mailed survey responders and the women who were interviewed in terms of responses to the variables surveyed.

Data Analysis

The personal interview forms and mailed surveys were processed and tabulated for analysis at the university's computer center. The resulting summaries were then used by the researcher for this report.

CHAPTER III

Findings

Introduction

This report is based on the analysis of responses from 66 women who were enrolled in or who had recently completed a VTAE program for the purpose of changing careers during mid-life. The women represent 43.4% of the sample contacted in 13 of the 16 VTAE districts in the state.

The findings are presented following the sequence of the outlined objectives and research areas.

Survey Results

a. Classification Data

The women in this sample represented a variety of occupational interests. Practical nursing, various secretarial programs, cosmotology, clothing services, accounting, data processing, medical technology, dietetics, cashier, nurse's aide, welding, drafting, and child care assistant programs were all represented in this survey sample. The majority represented the traditionally female-oriented occupations. Fifty-six percent of the respondents were in the final months of or had recently completed their course of study. Forty-three and nine tenths percent were currently enrolled in a VTAE program.

For most of the women, completion of high school was the highest level of education attained before initiating their mid-career change. Table III-1 shows the actual percentages and numbers at each educational level.

Table III-1

Highest Level of Education Attained
Prior to Mid-Career Change Schooling

Level of Education	Number of Responses	Percent of Total Responses
8th Grade	4	6.1
Some High School	9	13.6
High School Diploma	33	50.0
Vocational, Trade or Business School Degree	2	3.0
Some College	14	21.2
2 Year College Degree	0	0
4 Year College Degree	4	6.1

While the definition of a mid-career changer was a woman between the ages of 30 and 49, 10 women who were a few years younger or older than this age group were included in the analysis as the main focus of their return to school was to change careers. There was no significant difference on any of the variables between these women and those in the specified age group. The actual age composition of the sample was 6.1% under 30 years of age, 43.9% between 30 and 39, 40.9% between 40 and 49, and 9.1% were 50 years old or older.

Fifty-one and five tenths percent of the mid-career changers were separated, divorced, or widowed. Forty-eight and five tenths percent

were married. Only 2 respondents had no children while the average number of children per woman was 3.2. Seventy-two and five tenths percent of these women's children were under 18 years old and over one-half of these were of elementary school age (6-13 years old). Ninety-seven percent of the respondents were caucasion.

b. Objectives 1 and 2: Identify Areas of Personal Conflict for Women Changing Careers: Identify Common Socioeconomic and Psychological Benefits Enjoyed and Liabilities Incurred.

Research Area 1: Socioeconomic Status Including Financing the Transition Stage

Table III-2 reports total family income before deductions at the time the respondent enrolled in a VTAE program. Seventy-four and three tenths percent of the surveyed families lived on less than $10,000 per year and nearly one-half or 45.5% had incomes under $5,000. (See Table III-2)

Table III-2

Total Family Income Before Deductions
At Time Of Enrollment In A VTAE Program

Income	Number of Responses	Percent of Total Responses
No Response	2	3.0
Under $5,000	30	45.5
$5,000 to $10,000	19	28.8
$11,000 to $15,000	7	10.6
$16,000 to $20,000	3	4.5

When a cross-tabulation of marital status and income was analyzed it became apparent that of the 34 respondents who were widowed, separated or divorced, 79.4% were in the under $5,000 income bracket. (See Table III-3)

Table III-3

Comparison Of Marital Status And
Income Of Mid-Career Changers

Marital Status \ Income	No Response	Under $5000	$5000-$10,000	$11,000-$15,000	$16,000-$20,000	Over $20,000
Married	1.5 (1)*	4.5 (3)	21.2 (14)	9.0 (6)	7.5 (5)	4.5 (3)
Separated	0	6.0 (4)	3.0 (2)	1.5 (1)	0	0
Divorced	1.5 (1)	31.8 (21)	4.5 (3)	0	0	0
Widowed	0	3.0 (2)	0	0	0	0

* Numbers in parentheses indicate total number of responses.

It was not surprising then, that 53% of the women in this study were receiving government assistance through the WIN and CETA programs to finance their career transition stage. Thirteen and six tenths percent worked at full-time or part-time jobs. For 30.3% the present family income was adequate to meet the cost of their education.

For the majority (71.2%), their return to school was not accompanied by the employment of any outside household and/or child care help though some expressed a need for this. For the few who did have help, this was usually in the form of a babysitter and the cost was minimal or was

at least partially paid by the government assistance program which was helping finance their education.

Bearing in mind that most of these women had elementary school age children it was understandable that child care help may not be a pressing necessity. However, the fact that these children must be supported for at least another 5 to 12 years highlights the economic need of this mid-career change category.

C. Objectives 1 and 2; Research Area 2: Reactions and Relationships With Spouse, Family, and Friends Due to Career Change

Table III-4 indicates the attitude of the respondents' husbands toward their mid-career change. The highly significant finding from these data is that 28 of the 32 or 87.5% of the husbands were highly or generally favorable regarding their wife's change of status. During personal interviews many women elaborated upon this, explaining how necessary their husband's support, encouragement, and help around the house was or had been to their success in pursuing a mid-career change.

Table III-4

Attitude of Husband Toward Wife's Return To School

Attitude	Number of Responses	Percent of Total Responses
Not Applicable	25	37.9
Highly Favorable	16	24.2
Generally Favorable	12	18.2
Mixed Feelings	5	7.6
Indifferent	3	4.5

Attitude	Number of Responses	Percent of Total Responses
Generally Unfavorable	0	0
Highly Unfavorable	2	3.0
Don't Know	3	4.5

Table III-5 reports the attitudes of the children toward their mother's status change. Again, the majority are highly or generally favorable. Some women with high school age children remarked that their return to school had opened new avenues of communication between themselves and their children since they now shared the experience of being in school and that the family would often study together. Mothers with pre-schoolers were most likely to report that their children had mixed feelings.

Table III-5

Attitude of Children Toward Mother's Return To School

Attitude	Number of Responses	Percent of Total Responses
Not Applicable	2	3.0
Highly Favorable	35	53.0
Generally Favorable	17	25.8
Mixed Feelings	6	9.1
Indifferent	5	7.6
Generally Unfavorable	0	0
Highly Unfavorable	0	0
Don't Know	1	1.5

When queried as to their friend's opinions about their decision to return to school, most respondents also received support here as Table III-6 indicates. Many women during personal interviews related that friends admired their courage and determination and were sometimes envious of their success.

Table III-6

Attitude Of Woman's Friends Toward Her Return To School

Attitude	Number of Responses	Percent of Total Responses
No Response	1	1.5
Highly Favorable	32	48.5
Generally Favorable	22	33.3
Mixed Feelings	4	6.1
Generally Unfavorable	1	1.5
Highly Unfavorable	0	0
Indifferent	2	3.0
Don't Know	4	6.1

The significance of these data is the recognition of the importance of family and peer support for the woman involved in mid-career change. The decision to work outside the home seems to have a much better chance of success if other people at home support and encourage the career changer.

d. Objectives 1 and 2; Research Area 3: The Woman's Self-Image
Research Area 4: Use of Time, New Relationships, Interests, and Experiences

Table III-7 reports the reasons women expressed for initiating a mid-career change. The desire for self-improvement, to feel a sense of achievement, dissatisfaction with strictly the homemaker career, and to have something useful to do in coming years were among the reasons most often cited, indicating that many women were not completely satisfied in terms of their self-image prior to their career change. Understandably, a total of 86.4% expressed financial concerns as a reason. Also note that a total of 87.9% of the women returned to school to change a career, to refresh themselves in a previous career or to pursue an earlier career ambition revealing that almost all of the women had returned to school with definite career goals in mind.

Table III-7

Reasons Cited By Mid-Career Changers For Returning To School

Reason	No. of Responses	Percent of Total Responses
Economic necessity	33	50.0
To improve family financial conditions (though not a necessity)	24	36.4
To fulfill an earlier career ambition	21	31.8
To satisfy a change in career ambition	25	37.9
Intrinsic interest in the program of study	17	25.8
For self improvement	52	78.8
A desire to feel a sense of achievement	45	68.2
Bored or unsatisfied with strictly the homemaker career	22	33.3
Because many of my friends are also returning to school	3	4.5

Reason	No. of Responses	Percent of Total Responses
To meet new people and have new experiences	26	39.4
To refresh myself and continue in a career I had started before	12	18.2
To have something useful to do in coming years	46	69.7
Other: please specify___	6	9.1

When asked to select the primary reason for their mid-career change, 39.3% responded that it was due to the family financial situation and 31.6% reported self-improvement. achievement, dissatisfaction with strictly the homemaker career or the desire to have something useful to do in coming years as the main reason. While economics was naturally the most important factor for most of these women, a change in self-image was also a motivating force.

Table III-8

Primary Reason For Returning To School

Reason	No. of Responses	Percent of Total Responses
No Response	2	3.0
Economic necessity	17	25.7
To improve family financial conditions (though not a necessity)	9	13.6
To fulfill an earlier career ambition	4	6.0
To satisfy a change in career ambition	1	1.5
Intrinsic interest in the program of study	2	3.0

Reason	No. of Responses	Percent of Total Responses
For self improvement	3	4.5
A desire to feel a sense of achievement	8	12.1
Bored or unsatisfied with strictly the homemaker career	4	6.0
Because many of my friends are also returning to school	0	0
To meet new people and have new experiences	1	1.5
To refresh myself and continue in a career I had started before	3	4.5
To have something useful to do in coming years	6	9.0
Other: please specify_____	6	9.0

Despite the support of family and friends, mid-career change was not problem-free for most of the respondents. Table III-9 reports the percentage of women who felt that their return to school caused or aggravated existing problems in their lives. Lack of time and fatigue were the most common areas causing concern and many women reported that they simply had to neglect their housework, delegate more household responsibilities to their husbands and children, or reorganize their routines. Another common complaint was the lack of time to just relax and pursue hobbies and previous interests.

Table III-9

Problems Experienced By Mid-Career Changers While In School

Problem	No. of Responses	Percent of Total Responses
Financial problems	14	21.2
Marital problems	2	3.0
Problems with the children	7	10.6
Lack of time	35	53.0
Transportation	10	15.2
Personal physical or emotional problems	4	6.1
Loss of contact with previous friends and interests	9	13.6
Less social life	15	22.7
Problems running the household	11	16.7
Fatigue	24	36.4
Lowered self-image	2	3.0
More often depressed, moody, irritable	3	4.5
Other: please specify_____	5	7.6

The return to school was not without benefits, however, as Table III-10 reports. Most of the women found the feeling of achievement they sought and picked up self-confidence and new friends and interests also. The new self-confidence and feelings of achievement were benefits usually discussed at length during interviews, as most women recalled overwhelming feelings of self-doubt and fear of failure when starting their VTAE programs and were now very pleased with their ability to adjust and succeed in their endeavors.

Table III-10

Benefits Experienced By Mid-Career Changers While In School

Benefits	No. of Responses	Percent of Total Responses
Improved financial condition	21	31.8
Improved marital relationship	6	9.1
Improved relationships with the children	13	19.7
Benefits to the children such as increased independence, maturity, etc.	18	27.3
Increase in self-confidence	49	74.2
A feeling of achievement	55	83.3
I feel better about myself in many respects	40	60.6
More efficient use of my time	26	39.4
In general, I feel happier and in better spirits	44	66.7
New friends and interests	48	72.7
Help with the household responsibilities	14	21.2
Other: please specify_____	2	3.0

When asked specifically how they felt about their grades and course work progress, only 3% were unsatisfied. Seventy-four and three tenths percent reported having very few academic problems or none at all. Those who did report academic problems saw their lack of time and difficulty in test situations as being the greatest handicaps. Many women reported that the first few weeks were quite difficult until they adjusted to the new lifestyle they had undertaken and became accustomed to the school and the role of student. However, once the transition was made, few had any subject matter, skills, or study habit problems. Also, interesting to note, was that neither age nor previous level of education attained

affected the woman's ability in school as evidenced in Table III-11 and Table III-12.

Table III-11

Comparison Of Respondent's Age
And Number Of Academic Problems Encountered

Age \ Problems	No Response	Many Problems	Some Problems	Very Few Problems	None At All
Under 30	0	0	1.5 (1)*	1.5 (1)	3.0 (2)
30-39	4.5 (3)	0	6.0 (4)	13.6 (9)	19.6 (13)
40-49	0	3.0 (2)	10.6 (7)	10.6 (7)	16.6 (11)
50 and over	0	0	0	3.0 (2)	6.0 (4)

*Numbers in parentheses indicate total number of responses.

Table III-12

Comparison Of Respondent's Previous Level Of Education
And Number Of Academic Problems Encountered

Level of Education \ Problems	No Response	Many Problems	Some Problems	Few Problems	None At All
8th Grade	0	1.5 (1)*	0	3.0 (2)	1.5 (1)
Some High School	1.5 (1)	1.5 (1)	6.0 (4)	1.5 (1)	3.0 (2)
High School Diploma	3.0 (2)	0	7.5 (5)	15.1 (10)	24.2 (16)
Vocational, Trade or Business School Degree	0	0	0	1.5 (1)	1.5 (1)

Problems / Level of Education	No Response	Many Problems	Some Problems	Few Problems	None At All
Some College	0	0	3.0 (2)	6.0 (4)	12.1 (8)
2 Year College Degree	0	0	0	0	0
4 Year College Degree	0	0	1.5 (1)	1.5 (1)	3.0 (2)

* Numbers in parentheses indicate total number of responses.

From these findings it is evident that the majority of women involved in mid-career change were motivated by economic reasons and a desire to change their self-image. While in school, most women indeed felt that they had gained self-confidence and a feeling of achievement and most gained new friends and interests also. While the career-change transition stage did present problems, especially in terms of physical stamina, time demands, and initial adjustments, few women had any academic problems no matter what their age or previous level of education. By far the majority of these women felt pride in their accomplishments especially since most had been very doubtful of their ability when starting their VTAE program

e. Objective 3: Develop Implications and Recommendations for VTAE System Programming

One essential purpose of this study was to discern if female mid-career changers encountered age and/or sex prejudice in the VTAE system. The overwhelming response was "none at all". Only a few isolated cases emerged. Most women felt that they had been treated much more fairly than they had expected to be by both staff members and other students. They also reported no sex stereotyping or biases in their textbooks or classroom exercises.

While it is possible that complete equality reigns in all VTAE facilities and materials, it may be that the respondents were not aware of the more subtle forms that discrimination takes. For example, materials depicting business office or medical situations usually define the males in positions of authority to females (male boss/female secretary, male doctor/female nurse), and often show younger rather than older people in these situations. Since these situations reflect reality, few people are sensitive to the biases they exhibit. However, if the respondents felt that there was no stereotyping or biases in their VTAE experiences then clearly discrimination was not a problem for them.

A few respondents did note that they felt a prejudice toward women on government assistance programs. This was more often from the other students than from anyone on the VTAE staff although a few instructors and counselors were mentioned. However, most felt that they were receiving all the support possible from both faculty and classmates.

About half of the subjects who responded to the inquiries concerning traditionally male-oriented training programs and jobs said that there were none in which they were capable to work nor interested in pursuing. The category of jobs most often mentioned which did interest these women were accounting, data processing and those dealing with repair services such as watch, television, radio and small appliances. They were also interested in agricultural fields such as chemicals and feeds, animal husbandry, and meat cutting and wrapping. Perhaps the most noteworthy fact about these responses was their variety, for other vocations mentioned included auto mechanics, drafting, welding, carpentry, soldering, truck driving, and printing and graphics, indicating a vast array of interests and abilities.

While many women did not personally wish to pursue a traditionally male-oriented vocation, only 2 felt that females should not be in these occupations. More than half felt that women should be encouraged to enter any traditionally male-oriented job program which interested them. Again accounting, data processing and service repair fields ranked high. High priorities also went to such professions as business, medicine, law, architecture, religion, and politics. Most of the skilled trades were mentioned and also electronics, barbering, and police work.

As one might reason from the reactions to previous questions concerning sex stereotyping and biases, half of the respondents felt that there was no sex stereotyping at their school. Those who did have ideas for removing biases suggested:

1. Hiring competent female instructors for the traditionally male-oriented courses.
2. Having the school contact employers willing to hire females for traditionally male-oriented job openings and making these contacts available to the female students.
3. Using texts and materials which are unbiased and void of stereotypes.
4. Using in-service training programs to help teachers relate to older students and providing consciousness raising for male staff members.
5. Advertising and encouraging males and females to enter programs traditionally occupied by the opposite sex.
6. Installing women's facilities in those areas of the building housing traditionally male-oriented program classrooms.
7. Using people who are knowledgeable and sensitive to sex discrimination as resource persons in all phases of facility, program, and curriculum planning.

They also had specific suggestions regarding the types of encouragement VTAE schools could give women to prepare for traditionally male-oriented jobs and training programs. An overwhelming majority recommended that the schools advertise their interest in enrolling women for these programs, possibly through informal meetings with housewives in their homes or clubs. Respondents saw counselors as being instrumental in explaining traditionally male-oriented programs, giving examples of successful women in these fields, and offering interested women the moral support they might need. The women also thought it would be of assistance if females in these programs could have classes and counseling sessions together. Other suggestions included providing night programs, reduced fees for any person entering a training program not traditionally considered oriented toward their own sex, and the need to reach elementary and secondary school students to open their minds toward a broader career choice.

When asked how they personally could have been better prepared and counseled for returning to school and the labor market, many felt that their decisions and experiences were rather haphazard. Feeling that they had made the best of the situation they were now quite proud of how they had managed on their own. It was hardly surprising then that they offered numerous suggestions for improvement. Again came the request for advertising of the various programs and services the schools offer. The second most common plea was for an employment service of some sort by which they could be put in contact easily with unbiased prospective employers. In the area of specific counseling services, the women listed the following as being of greatest help and least availability:

1. Complete aptitude testing prior to enrolling.
2. Career and job counseling.

3. Group and individual counseling.

4. Single-parent counseling.

5. How to cope with the adjustments of returning to school.

6. How to cope with prospective employer and co-worker prejudice.

7. A chance to talk with women in similar situations who had been successful mid-career changers.

In terms of their actual school experience, the following were comments and suggestions:

1. The need for a short reorientation course for those who have been out of school for a considerable time.

2. Encourage women to attend night classes first to become familiar with the school.

3. Adjustments might be made in the amount of in-school time allowed for homework for housewives.

4. Field trips and discussions with people in the chosen careers were viewed as the most effective learning experiences.

5. Individualized instruction was considered best suited to their needs.

f. Objective 4: Design a Useful Model For Mid-Career Decision-Making

One of the more noteworthy findings of this study is that only 9 of the 66 women sought out a VTAE counselor for any academic or personal problems. Fourteen talked to an instructor. While 68.2% planned to or actually did seek employment immediately upon completion of their course work, 40.9% did not intend to seek any job or vocational counseling with a VTAE counselor although over one-third expressed concern about finding the type of job they really wanted. Most of the respondents were not

aware of the facilities and services offered by the school and were more likely to look to an instructor for help with personal, vocational, or academic problems. Clearly counselors need to be more visible to these women.

Drawing upon the review of literature and the findings of this study, a model emerges to help define the course of mid-career change. A number of factors come into play when a woman considers the career change from housewife and mother to labor force participant. Among these factors are the social and economic milieu of her lifestyle, her individual psychological make-up and available educational and work opportunities. Both the counselor and the VTAE school play an important part in utilizing these factors to each woman's advantage and full potential.

Figure III-1 depicts the process by which the mid-career changer comes to terms with herself and her environment.

As illustrated, each woman approaches a mid-career decision with her unique social, economic and psychological factors. She must also take into consideration the school and labor force opportunities in her area. All of these influencing factors can seem confusing and inhibiting to the person considering a career change. Each woman will face a different combination of concerns, obstacles and opportunities. Sorting through her feelings, developing priorities, and facing realities may seem an overwhelming task.

It is at this point that the VTAE school and a competent counselor become so important. VTAE system programming must be sensitive to the needs of these mid-career changers providing them with the educational opportunities they need. The role of the counselor is especially crucial, for with an understanding of the female mid-career changer, he/she can help each

woman sort through all the social, economic, psychological, educational and labor force factors of her situation. The key goals here are awareness, analysis, and action. Hopefully, the counselor can facilitate each woman's career transition by helping her become aware of all of the factors affecting her decision, analyzing and coming to terms with these factors, and then choosing the course of action that best suits the woman and her needs.

It is expected that the schools and counselors work together to provide useful and coordinated programs and facilities for mid-career changers.

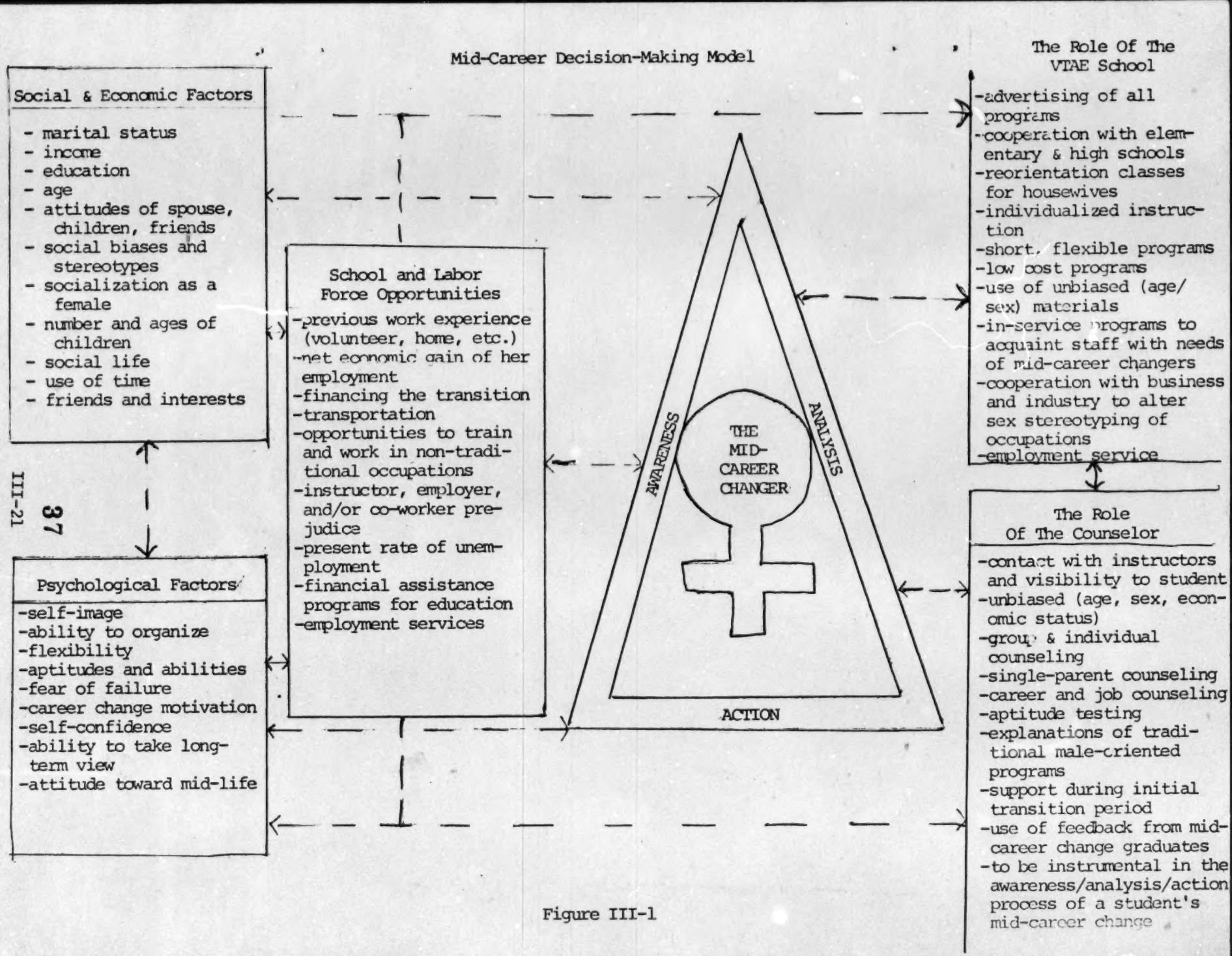
Mid-Career Decision-Making Model
Social & Economic Factors
- marital status
- income
- education
- age
- attitudes of spouse, children, friends
- social biases and stereotypes
- socialization as a female
- number and ages of children
- social life
- use of time
- friends and interests
School and Labor Force Opportunities
-previous work experience (volunteer, home, etc.)
-net economic gain of her employment
-financing the transition
-transportation
-opportunities to train and work in non-traditional occupations
-instructor, employer, and/or co-worker prejudice
-present rate of unemployment
-financial assistance programs for education
-employment services
Psychological Factors
-self-image
-ability to organize
-flexibility
-aptitudes and abilities
-fear of failure
-career change motivation
-self-confidence
-ability to take long-term view
-attitude toward mid-life
AWARENESS
ANALYSIS
THE MID-CAREER CHANGER
ACTION
The Role Of The VTAE School
-advertising of all programs
-cooperation with elementary & high schools
-reorientation classes for housewives
-individualized instruction
-short, flexible programs
-low cost programs
-use of unbiased (age/sex) materials
-in-service programs to acquaint staff with needs of mid-career changers
-cooperation with business and industry to alter sex stereotyping of occupations
-employment service
The Role Of The Counselor
-contact with instructors and visibility to student
-unbiased (age, sex, economic status)
-group & individual counseling
-single-parent counseling
-career and job counseling
-aptitude testing
-explanations of traditional male-oriented programs
-support during initial transition period
-use of feedback from mid-career change graduates
-to be instrumental in the awareness/analysis/action process of a student's mid-career change

Figure III-1

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study suggest two specific areas of the VTAE system, namely the counselor and the school, which might institute changes to better meet the needs of women changing careers in mid-life.

The Role of the VTAE School

1. Advertise existing programs and the desire to include students of the opposite sex in the traditionally male or female programs.
2. Cooperate with the elementary and secondary schools to widen career aspirations of both sexes and break down stereotypes.
3. Offer a school reorientation class for returning housewives and other mid-career changers.
4. Programs should be low-cost, short, flexible, use on-the-job training experiences, and utilize individualized instruction as much as possible.
5. Use unbiased (age/sex) classroom materials and provide in-service training for staff members working with the female mid-career changer.
6. Cooperate with business and industry to break down sex stereotyping of occupations.
7. Provide an employment service of some type which has as a part of its mission assisting the mid-career changer.

Role of the VTAE Counselor

1. Establish contacts with instructors working with mid-career changers and make him/herself and the existing counseling services visible to these women.

2. Be unbiased toward the sex, age, and economic status of these women.
3. Offer counseling situations whereby the woman can become aware of, analyze, and act upon the sociological and psychological influences in her life and come to terms with her mid-career change.
4. Offer these women special counseling services such as group, individual, career and single-parent sessions.
5. Offer complete, nondiscriminatory aptitude testing.
6. To explain the expectations and job opportunities of traditionally male-oriented training programs and encourage those women with the aptitude and interest to pursue these fields.
7. Provide mid-career changers support during the critical first few weeks back in school.
8. Solicit and utilize feedback from mid-career change graduates to better prepare those now in school.

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APPENDIX A

VTAE Districts Providing Mid-Career Change Respondents

1. * Indianhead
2. * District 1
3. Blackhawk
4. Nicolet
5. * Fox Valley
6. Lakeshore
7. Waukesha
8. Milwaukee
9. Mid-State
10. Moraine Park
11. * Western
12. * North Central
13. Gateway

* Districts in which personal interviews were conducted

Appendix B

Survey Instrument and Accompanying
Cover Letter

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

STOUT

MENOMONIE WISCONSIN 54751

May 1975

Dear Colleague:

I am conducting a study for the Center for Vocational, Technical, and Adult Education System at UW-Stout which deals with mid-career changes for women. The purpose of the study is to identify areas of concern to women like yourself who return to school and to ascertain if the VTAE instructional programs and services meet your needs. In areas where more help is needed, we need your suggestions and comments for improvement.

Will you please help in this study by answering the questions on the enclosed survey form? Whether you are presently enrolled in a VTAE program or have recently completed one, your participation in this research is greatly needed and appreciated. All of your responses remain confidential.

Please complete the survey form and return it as soon as possible to:

Sharon Nero
CVTAE
Applied Arts Building
UW-Stout
Menomonie, Wisconsin 54751

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Sharon Nero

Sharon Nero

SN/pb

Enclosure

CVTAE
(4-29-75)

MID-CAREER CHANGE SURVEY

DIRECTIONS: Please answer the following questions by placing an X in front of the appropriate answer or by filling in the blank where necessary. These questions are designed for those presently enrolled in the VTAE system. If you are one of the respondents who has already completed your course of study, plese answer the questions recalling your experiences and opinions as they were at the time you were enrolled.

1. In what program are you enrolled?

_____

2. Date on which you started your program. _____ Month _____ Year

3. Date on which you expect to finish this program. _____ Month _____ Year

4. Up until starting this program, what was the highest level of education you had completed?

___ (1) 8th grade
___ (2) Some high school
___ (3) High school diploma
___ (4) Vocational, trade, or business school degree
___ (5) Some college
___ (6) 2 year college degree
___ (7) 4 year college degree
___ (8) Other: please specify _____

5. What was your age at the time of your enrollment in your VTAE program?

___ (1) Under 30
___ (2) 30 - 39
___ (3) 40 - 49
___ (4) 50 and over

6. What was your marital status at that time?

___ (1) Married
___ (2) Separated
___ (3) Divorced
___ (4) Widowed
___ (5) Single (If you selected this choice, go to Item 9)

7. How many children did you have at the time of your first class session? _____

8. What were the ages of your children at that time, from oldest to youngest?

_____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____

9. What is your racial background?

___ (1) White
___ (2) Black
___ (3) Oriental
___ (4) Native American
___ (5) Other: please specify _____

10. What was your total family income before deductions at the time of your first class session?

___ (1) Under $5,000
___ (2) $5,000 - $10,000
___ (3) $11,000 - $15,000
___ (4) $16,000 - $20,000
___ (5) Over $20,000

11. Has your return to school caused you to obtain any outside household and/or child care help?

___ (1) Yes, on a full-time basis
___ (2) Yes, on a part-time basis
___ (3) Only occasionally
___ (4) Not at all (if you selected this item go to #14)

12. What type of help is this? (Check more than one if appropriate)

___ (1) Cleaning person
___ (2) Baby sitter
___ (3) Someone who both cleans and cares for the children
___ (4) Child day care center
___ (5) Other: please specify _____

13. Approximately how much does this help cost you per week? $_____

14. How do you finance your education including paying for any household or child care help? (Check more than one if appropriate)

___ (1) Present family income is adequate
___ (2) I will draw on past savings
___ (3) I must work at a part-time job while going to school
___ (4) I must work at a full-time job while going to school
___ (5) Other: please specify _____

15. What do you believe is your husband's attitude toward your return to school?

___ (1) Not applicable, husband deceased, never married, etc.
___ (2) Highly favorable
___ (3) Generally favorable
___ (4) Mixed feelings
___ (5) Indifferent
___ (6) Generally unfavorable
___ (7) Highly unfavorable
___ (8) Don't know

16. What do you believe is your children's attitudes toward your return to school?

___ (1) Not applicable, no children
___ (2) Highly favorable
___ (3) Generally favorable
___ (4) Mixed feelings
___ (5) Indifferent
___ (6) Generally unfavorable
___ (7) Highly unfavorable
___ (8) Don't know

17. What do you believe is the attitude of most of your friends toward your return to school?

___ (1) Highly favorable
___ (2) Generally favorable
___ (3) Mixed feelings
___ (4) Generally unfavorable
___ (5) Highly unfavorable
___ (6) Indifferent
___ (7) Don't know

18. What are your reasons for returning to school? (Check more than one if appropriate)

___ (1) Economic necessity
___ (2) To improve family financial condidtions (though not a necessity)
___ (3) To fulfill an earlier career ambition
___ (4) To satisfy a change in career ambition
___ (5) Intrinsic interest in the program of study
___ (6) For self improvement
___ (7) A desire to feel a sense of achievement
___ (8) Bored or unsatisfied with strictly the homemaker career
___ (9) Because many of my friends are also returning to school
___ (10) To meet new people and have new experiences
___ (11) To refresh myself and continue in a career I had started before
___ (12) To have something useful to do in coming years
___ (13) Other: please specify _____

19. Of all of the above reasons, what is your primary reason for returning to school? (Circle number below which represents the appropriate item)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

20. Which, if any, of the following problems have you experienced which you feel were caused by or greatly aggravated by your return to school? (Check more than one if appropriate)

___ (1) Financial problems
___ (2) Marital problems
___ (3) Problems with the children
___ (4) Lack of time
___ (5) Transportation
___ (6) Personal physical or emotional problems
___ (7) Loss of contact with previous friends and interests
___ (8) Less social life
___ (9) Problems running the household
___ (10) Fatigue
___ (11) Lowered self-image
___ (12) More often depressed, moody, irritable
___ (13) Other: please specify _____

21. Which, if any, of the following things do you feel are benefits caused by your return to school? (Check more than one if appropriate)

___ (1) Improved financial condition
___ (2) Improved marital relationship
___ (3) Improved relationships with the children
___ (4) Benefits to the children such as increased independence, maturity, etc.
___ (5) Increase in self-confidence
___ (6) A feeling of achievement
___ (7) I feel better about myself in many respects
___ (8) More efficient use of my time
___ (9) In general, I feel happier and in better spirits
___ (10) New friends and interests
___ (11) Help with the household responsibilities
___ (12) Other: please specify _____

22. How do you feel about your grades and progress in your course work?

___ (1) Very Satisfied
___ (2) Generally Satisfied
___ (3) Generally Unsatisfied
___ (4) Very Unsatisfied

23. Have you had any academic problems?

___ (1) Yes, many problems
___ (2) Some problems
___ (3) Very few problems
___ (4) None at all

24. If you have or have had any academic problems, which of the following caused the trouble? (Check more than one if appropriate)

___ (1) Difficulty of the subject matter
___ (2) Difficulty in memorizing
___ (3) Lack of reading skills
___ (4) Lack of writing skills
___ (5) Lack of math skills
___ (6) Lack of research skills
___ (7) Bad study habits
___ (8) Too many other demands on my time
___ (9) Difficulty in test situations
___ (10) Stamina and health
___ (11) Personality conflicts with the instructor(s)
___ (12) Other: Please specify

_____

25. If you sought help for any academic or personal problems, to whom did you go? (Check more than one if appropriate)

___ (1) Not applicable
___ (2) VTAE instructor(s)
___ (3) VTAE counselor
___ (4) Clergy person
___ (5) Outside social agency
___ (6) Classmate(s)
___ (7) Other: please specify, but no names please

_____

26. If you sought help from someone in the VTAE, how helpful were they?

___ (1) Not applicable
___ (2) Very helpful
___ (3) Somewhat helpful
___ (4) A little helpful
___ (5) Not at all helpful

27. Upon completion of your VTAE course, do you intend to seek employment?

___ (1) Yes, right away
___ (2) Yes, but not for several months
___ (3) No, not for at least a year
___ (4) I will seek employment in the future, but no date
___ (5) I do not intend at this time to ever seek employment

28. If you will be seeking employment during the year after you complete your VTAE course, how do you feel about your prospects of getting a job?

___ (1) I already have a job lined up

___ (2) I am confident that I will be able to find the type of job I want

___ (3) I am somewhat concerned about finding the type of job I want

___ (4) I am very concerned about finding the type of job I want

___ (5) I am almost certain I will have to take a job other than the type I really want

29. Have you had any job or vocational counseling with a VTAE counselor?

___ (1) Yes

___ (2) Not yet, though I intend to seek their help

___ (3) No, and I do not intend to seek their help

30. If you have received job or vocational counseling, how helpful was it?

___ (1) Not applicable

___ (2) Very helpful

___ (3) Somewhat helpful

___ (4) A little helpful

___ (5) Not at all helpful

31. Did you perceive any bias or prejudice in this counseling due to your age and/or sex?

___ (1) Not applicable

___ (2) Yes, both age and sex prejudice

___ (3) Yes, prejudice in terms of age

___ (4) Yes, prejudice in terms of sex

___ (5) None at all

32. If you did preceive age and/or sex prejudice, what form did it take? (Check more than one if appropriate)

___ (1) Not applicable

___ (2) Less time spent with me than with younger women or men

___ (3) Use of a sex-biased aptitude test

___ (4) Exclusion from certain courses due to my age or sex though neither qualifies one for the course

___ (5) Refusal or reluctance of counselor to discuss non-traditional fields

___ (6) Inability or reluctance of counselor to understand the problems unique to women of my age and social position

___ (7) Other: please specify _____

33. Have you perceived any age and/or sex biases in the following areas? (Check more than one if appropriate)

____ (1) From instructor(s) personally

____ (2) In lectures or class presentations

____ (3) In assignments, textbooks, or readings

____ (4) From other students

____ (5) In facilities or scheduling

____ (6) Other: please specify _____

____ (7) I have perceived no biases at all

34. Which traditionally male-oriented training programs would you be interested in pursuing?

35. Which traditionally male-oriented jobs would you be willing and capable to work in?

36. Which traditionally male-oriented jobs should women be encouraged to enter?

37 What can the VTAE schools do to counter sex stereotyping of training programs and job preparation? What suggestions do you have for removing biases in facilities, equipment, curriculum, and instruction?

38. How can VTAE schools encourage women to prepare for traditionally male-oriented jobs and training programs?

39. In what ways do you feel women in your situation could be better prepared and/or counseled as far as returning to school and the labor market?

40. Please use the remainder of the page for any comments you may have, especially on areas that this survey failed to investigate.

If you would like a summary of the results, give your name and address below:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you. Please return to:

Sharon Nero
CVTAE
Applied Arts Building
UW-Stout
Menomonie, Wisconsin 54751